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POSSIBILITY OF RIOTS IN TRIESTE

Extremists will almost certainly create some disturbances in Trieste this weekend. The main participants will probably be adherents of the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI), although others, including the Communists, will probably get involved. The seriousness of the demonstrations will depend partly on how many members from the more moderate groups participate. This in turn will depend on the extent to which local Italian officials and center party leaders will sincerely work towards avoiding riots. The weather and the mood of the politically vociferous students are two other important factors.

The Allied authorities have authorized no meetings in Trieste for this weekend. Thus, although the police will be in a better position to take preventative action, this is no guarantee against outbreaks. The 8 March grenade explosion took place during an unscheduled demonstration.

The MSI has been consistently reported as preparing for demonstrations, [redacted]

[redacted] While the local MSI leader has stated his opposition to rioting, he also said he could not control his followers. Furthermore, the activists for any MSI riots may come from Italy as was the case on 8 March.

Two reports last week indicated that the Communists were planning to fight the MSI if the latter does riot. However Vidali, the Trieste Communist leader, allegedly does not expect riots this year.

Italian officials and party leaders in Trieste are reported to be actively opposed to any demonstrations. However, even assuming they are sincere, they can at best control only the more moderate among their followers. Furthermore, although these centrist leaders may fear that riots this year might lead to annexation of Zone B by Yugoslavia or to other results that would hurt their cause, they may feel compelled to go along with any disturbances if these have strong popular support. They cannot allow the right wing extremists to become the popular symbol of Italian irredentism.

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A Yugoslav Foreign Office official recently stated that Belgrade did not want riots, and would hold Rome responsible for any that did occur. He stated that extensive rioting with injury to Yugoslav citizens or property would call for "energetic measures." However, these would probably be confined to strong diplomatic notes, since Yugoslavia would not be likely to annex Zone B except as a retaliatory measure for Italy's assumption of greater control of Zone A.

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